

SIX
RADIO TALKS
ON
THEOSOPHY

TWENTY-SIXTH SERIES

As Presented By
THE FOUNDATION FOR
RADIO THEOSOPHY
.....
OJAI, CALIFORNIA

504

FREEDOM AND THE QUEST FOR TRUTH

Beginning a series of thirteen talks by Dr. Alfred Taylor.

Freedom and truth are precious words - and, are closely linked together for without truth, there can be no freedom; and without freedom we cannot find the truth. Fortunately, part of the heritage of a human being is a certain degree of built-in truth, as well as innate freedom of mind. But it remains for each of us to use these assets wisely and thoughtfully if we are to add to our understanding, and so grow in freedom.

If we are to have meaning in our lives, we are forced to expand in thought, knowledge, understanding; and life provides us ample opportunity to do this. As we all know, there are inescapables in life, which we must face and to which we must adjust ourselves. We are born into the world, and after a varying number of years, made up of periods of pleasure and pain, our body dies. We know this to be true. These facts are beyond the realm of speculation. In addition, we note all around us strange inequalities in the lives of our fellow men and women. Some are born into fortunate conditions of health and well-being. Others come into life limited and handicapped from the beginning. We observe that tiny infants are inflicted with suffering and death. Numerous babies each year in this country develop cancer of the eye in the first few months of life. It is often necessary to remove one or both eyes, but if the disease has spread to other parts of the nervous system, death may still be the end result. There is the spectacle of whole populations forced to endure privation and hunger just because they happen to be born in a particular country. And there are endless other trials for all mankind.

Yes, life forces us to expand our understanding. Can we live with any approach to tranquility if we have no explanation for these happenings which are constantly before us and are present in every country, in every age? Obviously not. Those who are young, healthy and well cared for may feel no urgency about these occurrences. But we live dynamic lives. Things do not stand still. Trials and troubles, pain and death, finally come to us all. Success and satisfaction in all our affairs are based on understanding. Bodily health, for example, can be maintained only as we have sufficient knowledge about such things as exercise, nutrition, relaxation, and as we put this learning into practice. Likewise our joy and happiness depend upon knowledge which reveals the meaning and purpose of our lives. Our peace of mind is gained slowly as we come to know something of the truth about ourselves and our relation

to the world we live in. Is this a universe of law and order where perfect justice rules the world, or do things just happen carelessly?

We all know that there are many different reactions to these problems of life. Some people try to ignore the disagreeable facts of human existence. Life is a game of chance, some will say - there are the fortunate and the unfortunate. Life spins the wheel of fortune, and it stops at random, here and there. In this way, these people try to shut out the sound and sight of human suffering and turmoil. They try, but do not succeed. For the realities of life spare no one, and they cannot be erased by ignoring them.

There are others who try to avoid thinking about these problems by saying it is the will of God. As an example, in medieval times, when the great plagues came to Europe and brought death to multitudes of people, the tendency was to meet the problem by saying that these catastrophes were the will of God. Later, science learned how to control these diseases and so demonstrated that it was man's ignorance, not the will of God, which was responsible for these great afflictions. No doubt the total universe, and all that is expressed in it, is the will of God. But we can assume too, that since man was endowed with intelligence, he is expected to use it and so to obtain the knowledge he needs. Ignorance is our responsibility, not the will of the Creator.

Fortunately for mankind, there have always been the few who have sought to know as much of the truth as possible. They have not been content to evade their responsibilities and take ready-made solutions to the problems of life from others. The independent thinkers have boldly faced life and sought to know as much of the realities of nature and man as they could appreciate. These are the people who have been the pioneers in the growth of human knowledge. In any age, it is only the fearless seekers of truth who break through old traditions and attain to new discoveries, new understanding. It is also quite natural that such individuals will be regarded with hostility by the many who are content to remain in the pattern of thinking in which they were born. The followers of an established order become fearful when the beliefs which mean so much to them are challenged by new ideas. As a consequence, he who insists on freedom in the approach to truths which are of vital importance to man tends to arouse resentment and hate. In times past, the original thinker often paid with his life for

daring to be dissatisfied with the accepted answers to questions important to human welfare.

We can appreciate, too, that the independent thinker encounters only a few people here and there who are in sympathy with his insistence on freedom in the quest for truth. And the few with similar views tend to come together in order to be able to exchange ideas and thoughts in a congenial atmosphere. In this way, investigations and research of common interest become possible, and the results of such studies can be kept from too much scrutiny by the unfriendly followers of set beliefs and dogmas. It is reasonable to assume that the mystery schools of the past were developed and sustained by such people. From such centers of learning have come humanity's great advances in science, philosophy and religion.

The very mood and purpose of the enlightened seeker for truth must include as a primary objective the sharing with others of the fruits of his learning. On the other hand, it is never wise to reveal to people more of the truth than they are ready to receive. In past ages, whenever this principle was forgotten, the release of new truths led to turbulence and bloodshed.

In our modern era, we have in The Theosophical Society an example of an organization suited to the needs of those who seek understanding in freedom. This Society has always been unique in its insistence that each of its members be completely free to accept or reject whatever teachings are offered. Differences in thought and approach to truth are encouraged. If a person is a follower of a particular religion, the policy of The Theosophical Society is to help that person to increase his understanding of his faith. Since there is this emphasis on freedom, it naturally follows that no distinction in the membership of the Society is made because of race or religion. So, in an organization of this type it becomes possible to unite people from all over the world in a common search for the real values of life.

The teachings released through The Theosophical Society represent knowledge which is contained in philosophic, scientific and religious writings of various countries and times. By studying these teachings we learn to recognize the golden thread of the Ageless Wisdom as it is woven into so much of man's past and present. We discover that Theosophy, which means Divine Wisdom, is the basis of the world religions and is that which adds the quality of greatness to philosophy and

art. Further, the basic concepts in this wisdom are being verified by the data of science.

When the independent seeker for truth encounters the Ageless Wisdom, which is a heritage from the seekers of the past, he finds that it is not given dogmatically or on the basis of authority. He discovers that it is to be accepted only as he makes it his own through reason, experience and intuition. But as the student does realize its truth, he finds that this knowledge greatly accelerates his progress in understanding. The key to many of the enigmas that confront us lies in the thinking and discoveries of those who in the past investigated and studied with open minds.

There are many roads, we are told, that lead to the goal of truth, of understanding. We can proceed through study and investigation. We can go forward by seeking within, in meditation, in thought; or we can attain enlightenment by association with an inspired, radiant teacher. We can go by the way of science, art, philosophy or religion. But whatever is involved in all of these approaches to reality, we can be assured that there must be independence; there must be inner and outer freedom if we are to move forward in our quest. This means that the seeker for truth rises above the dogmas, the superstitions, the customs in thought and belief of his time and place. He is not swayed by popular acclaim for this or that, but goes forward with an open mind towards increasing light. The knowledge we need comes to us as we are ready to receive it.

As we said in the beginning of this talk, freedom and truth are closely linked together. For without freedom there can be no approach to truth, and without truth freedom is dead. The truth must be sought in freedom, and it is the truth that makes us free.

THEOSOPHICAL TEACHINGS

We live mainly in a world of unknowns. Even the commonplace happenings which go on around us are but little understood. For example, the development and growth of plants and animals are, in spite of many books devoted to these subjects, still far beyond our understanding. We tend to think we know more than we do. The mind loves to exalt its powers and accomplishments and to point to the darkness of past ages in contrast to what is believed to be present enlightenment. There is, no doubt, much knowledge in this modern era, but it is mostly of a superficial nature. This is especially so where living organisms are concerned. A few decades hence, our present time may be looked upon as a period of much error and confusion.

When we turn to human affairs, we begin to realize just how limited our knowledge is in certain directions. We all have questions which we would like to have answered. Many things vitally associated with our lives seem to be unfathomable and beyond a reasonable explanation. Yet it is difficult to live harmoniously without the guidance of right understanding in these affairs.

What are some of the questions which, at one time or another, demand our attention? One of the commonest of these questions is, what are we here for, what is the purpose of our lives? Another question that troubles many people is that of suffering? We want to know how we can harmonize the sufferings of innocent people, or babies, with a world of justice. Still others wonder about death and its place in man's experience. These are but a few of the questions which have troubled man down through the ages. Theosophy gives us knowledge which helps us to resolve these problems.

At the present time, science has great prestige, mainly because its discoveries have led to improvements in our material circumstances. We are especially impressed by the gadgets and machines which have resulted from scientific investigations and which have served to make our lives easier. Also, science has given us increased understanding, not only in mechanics and engineering, but also in other aspects of nature and of ourselves. In spite of all the brilliant discoveries which have come out of science, there is nothing in scientific knowledge which will help us to solve our real problems. Science deals mainly with the material world and man is more than material. The questions which so vitally concern us are not con-

sidered in scientific investigations.

Another great approach to reality, to understanding, is through religion. Can we not obtain through the sacred scriptures the knowledge which will give us the understanding we seek? Certainly we can and do receive inspiration and inner strength through religious teachings. But modern Christianity is mainly a religion of devotion and faith. We do not expect to get scientific knowledge through religion nor religious insights through science. Adoration of the Divine is a vital aspect of all the great religions and a necessary part of our lives; but in addition to this, it is our responsibility to use our minds and to proceed as far as possible towards the goal of understanding. We need information that will help us to appreciate better our place in the universe.

Fortunately, the knowledge needed to answer the questions mentioned earlier is available to those who seek it. Man has been concerned about such questions for thousands of years, and the knowledge we need to answer them has been accumulated by the cooperative efforts of numerous individuals throughout human history. Every aspect of the laws of life and death have been carefully and scientifically investigated. Because of its ancient origins, the enlightenment which has come from these researches is frequently called the Ancient, or the Ageless Wisdom. Another name for this wisdom which has come down through the centuries is Theosophy. The term Theosophy is derived from the Greek words, Theo and sophia, meaning Divine Wisdom. In these teachings we not only obtain the knowledge which will enable us to live more harmoniously, but we discover that the Ageless Wisdom is in accord with reason and experience.

In a brief talk, such as this, only a bare outline of Theosophy can be given, but this will suffice to reveal its scope and quality. The interested listener can obtain reading material which will reveal deeper and more detailed aspects of the teachings. Through Theosophy we can obtain the light which illuminates, in a very special way, the problems of a lifetime. These teachings bring order into that which seemed to be in confusion. As we pursue the study of Theosophy, we recognize that we can have caught glimpses of it before in literature, in the scriptures and in philosophical writings. As our studies continue, we experience a gradual integration of values in the works of man and of nature.

The key word to theosophical teachings is evolution. We are

pilgrims on a long journey. The pilgrimage is necessary for the growth and development of our real nature, the Spiritual Self. Naturally, spiritual development cannot be accomplished in the relatively brief span of years which constitutes one lifetime. So, according to these teachings, we go through many lives, gaining experience and understanding as we come back again and again. We know from science that there is the law of cause and effect which governs the actions and reactions of matter and energy. The same law, known in the East as karma, is effective in the happenings of our lives. It is this law which is responsible for our joys and sorrows, for our gains and losses. As we conduct our lives in accordance with the Divine Plan of the universe, we grow in harmony and in spiritual development, and as we go contrary to the higher values, we suffer and become limited in capacity and accomplishment. So, in the light of this wisdom, the question, what is the purpose of our lives, is answered very simply. The purpose of life is to develop the spiritual nature so that we can assume our rightful place in the bliss and the work of the universe.

Man is essentially a spirit. The body serves as an instrument through which the spirit can function on this physical plane. The same is true for our emotions and the lower aspects of our mind. These too are instruments for the use of the inner Self. Back of these there is the light that lighteth every man who comes into the world. St. Paul, in 1st Corinthians, speaks of the natural man which is of the earth and the man that grows out of this as "the Lord from Heaven." He goes on to say, "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." The goal before us is stated, "Till we all come....unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

According to the ageless Wisdom, a person is born into the world as a man or a woman, in this race or that in accordance with what is needed to promote inner growth, the growth of the soul. He or she completes the life. The body is cast aside, a period of time is spent in certain higher planes of nature for transitory adjustments, after which the individual goes to a state spoken of in Christian terminology as heaven. In the heaven world, the experiences of the past life are assimilated. Then the Spiritual Self is again born into a new life on earth. The suffering and privation endured in the physical body is the result of past errors in living and serves to teach us to avoid such mistakes in the future. But what about the sufferings of tiny babies? How can they know anything about past

errors? The answer is that back of the baby's body is the Spiritual Self. It is "the Lord from Heaven," to use St. Paul's designation. It is this which incarnates. It is the Self which continues and develops through many lives. This real Self knows why its instrument, the baby's body, is suffering and how to avoid such trouble in the future.

The growth of the soul, through repeated experience in lives on this earth, can perhaps be understood if we think of the evolvement of human ideas. For example, the automobile began as an idea in someone's mind. This idea was embodied as a car, was built and put into operation. As a result of the experience gained by running the car, the design or blue print, was improved and reembodied in a new vehicle. In this way, the automobile design has passed through millions of materializations, or bodies, as it has slowly developed and evolved to its present status. Likewise, with the soul of man, it grows and evolves as it passes through many incarnations. Our joys and sufferings, our limitations and opportunities become understandable and reasonable when viewed from the perspective of the needs of the soul. If we are to develop, to evolve into thinking, responsible, independent beings we must experience and learn the great lessons of life for ourselves. This is the reason for the long pilgrimage that everyone must complete, a pilgrimage which takes us through lives filled with diverse experiences so that we learn firsthand the lessons of heaven and earth.

We often think of ourselves as tossed here and there, helpless in the midst of powers and conditions over which we have no control. A knowledge of Theosophy helps us to dispel this idea. We learn that we are the products of our past thoughts, feelings and actions, and that our present behavior is deciding what we will be in the future. We can begin now to build a better tomorrow.

We are truly the makers of our fate. Much help comes to us from visible and invisible sources. But no one can help us unless we prepare the way by right efforts and right aspirations.

THEOSOPHY IN EXPERIENCE

Most of us take it for granted that if we are to increase our knowledge, we must do so by the study of books, by listening to lectures, or by other ways of contacting the thinking and discoveries of those wiser than ourselves. We will all agree that this way to learning cannot be neglected, since it enables us to make use of the accumulated knowledge of the past and present. But before we are in a position to accept what we receive in this way, it is necessary for us not only to understand, but to check its reliability. We are impelled to think about what we read and hear, and test it in the light of reason and experience.

If we are concerned with learning a technical subject, there is not much doubt about the practical value of the subject matter. We are mainly concerned with understanding and applying it in practice. But if we are in search of the wisdom needed to orient ourselves better in this world of beings and things, then it becomes necessary to scrutinize very carefully the ideas we encounter.

Whenever, in past ages, people have been forced to accept philosophical or religious teachings given out by those who claimed to be authorities, superstition and delusion have become the rule. This was notably so in the Dark Ages in Europe. Also, we need to keep in mind that beliefs are not necessarily free from error just because the great majority of a population clings to them. Man's growth in understanding has been marked by the discarding of ideas and beliefs which had their day of nearly unanimous acceptance.

In addition to what we acquire from books and lectures, there is another source of knowledge which is so commonplace that we tend to think little about it. Our own experience is one of the best teachers available to us. This is especially so when we are guided by careful study of the usual sources of learning.

Think how dramatic and how meaningful are the events of our lives. There is the mighty pageant of day and night, the seasons, the extremes of temperature, the storms. We witness the growth, the death and decay of plants, the aging and passing away of animals and people. It is as if we watched the work of a group of great artists who were continuously planning and executing a play of unthinkable power, beauty and sometimes seeming tragedy. Who can imagine anything more spec-

tacular than the rising or setting of the sun, or the night sky illuminated with moon and stars! And think how our world is transformed in northern regions from the lush green of summer to the cold whiteness of winter. How many of us have listened with a thrill to the soft conversation passing back and forth in a flock of migrating geese as they passed high overhead in an autumn or spring night sky!

We may never have bothered about these vivid and direct contacts with nature and with our fellow beings, but if we give them some attention we obtain information and wisdom which enables us to check, in some degree, the teachings which are offered to us from so many different groups.

The teachings of Theosophy, or the Ageless Wisdom, are in accord with reason and intuition. But how do the basic concepts or principles of these teachings harmonize with the message that comes to us directly from our own experience? In the brief time available in this talk we can only consider this question as it relates to a few of the main teachings of Theosophy.

One of the fundamental concepts of Theosophy is the oneness of life or spirit. It is assumed that there is one basic reality, and all that exists in the universe is a manifestation of that one life or spirit. As a result of the discoveries in modern physics, particularly those of Einstein, it is now known that everything, from a pebble to a star, from the body of a worm to the body of a man, has evolved from one source, electromagnetic energy. Energy is a term for something completely unknown in itself and could just as well be called life or spirit.

We cannot check directly either the assumptions of science or those of the Ageless Wisdom, but we do know from experience that when the bodies of various birds, of plants and animals are burned they are reduced to essentially the same ash. This obviously demonstrates that widely differing plant and animal forms owe their uniqueness to organization. It is the way the source material is organized that determines the differences in these forms. We know, too, from experience, that organization and design are the products of intelligence. So, from our own contacts with nature, there is evidence that back of the differing forms we perceive, there is a oneness of material.

In another way, too, we have evidence for the unity of the material basis of all forms. We know that plants can trans-

form mineral matter into living tissues, which in turn will sustain animal life, including our own. So, from the burning of different bodies which breaks them down into nearly identical substances, and the growth of different plants and animals from the same minerals, we can realize that the great contrasts in size, shape and character of plant and animal bodies are all molded from a common source substance.

We cannot know life or spirit except through its manifestations. Likewise, the scientist knows electricity only through its manifestations. But the experience of both scientists and ourselves testifies that the diverse forms of the living and the monliving arise from one energy or life.

Another teaching of the Ancient Wisdom tells us that material forms are transitory, that it is the inner design which is unaffected by time. We all know from experience the truth of this concept. We constantly witness the deterioration and decay of structures. Even mighty mountains reveal their age by the deep canyons that have been eroded in their sides. Our houses, our clothes, our machines, and our bodies wear away as we use them. But we also know that in living forms the permanence of the design has been passed through millions of oak trees as it slowly developed and evolved. We have this same principle demonstrated in human affairs. The design of a machine, such as the automobile, has been passed through millions of bodies as it slowly evolved into its modern state.

We live in a universe which is the expression of the One Spirit or Life; hence the laws, the principles which apply to the whole, must be present in the very tiny aspect of Life which we know through experience. As the old Hermetic axiom states, "As above, so below." The scientist takes it for granted that the reality of nature is as present in a pebble as in a planet or a solar system. The little we perceive contains general principles which apply to the universe. The teaching of Theosophy that the law of cause and effect, or karma, is a dominant influence in our lives is part of our everyday experience. We all know, to some extent, the truth of the Biblical saying, "As ye sow, so shall ye also reap." We observe that if we neglect to eat and exercise properly we feel the results in lessened vitality; and in other levels of our being the reign of law is evident. Stressful thoughts and emotions lead to unhappiness, while serene, peaceful behavior brings tranquility and joy to our lives. We note the action of cause and effect in the ocean tides, in the seasons and in all other phenomena of nature. Always, everywhere and in ourselves the

law of karma is revealed to us.

Through our experiences in a lifetime we obtain evidence for the important teachings that have come to us through Theosophy or the Ageless Wisdom. The pageant of nature reveals the transitory character of forms and the continuance of design or meaning. Everywhere we note the rhythm of activity and rest, of an active phase, such as a living body, and an inactive phase, such as seeds or germ cells. And constantly we experience within ourselves, and in the beings and things around us, the law of karma or cause and effect.

The seekers of wisdom are confronted with many sources of knowledge, and since they are seekers they are independent in mind and thought. They listen to lectures, read books and ponder over other approaches to truth. But always there is the inner desire towards something more immediate than the ideas of others, however wise they may seem to be. For these people, there is a different kind of book, the book of experience which brings the reader into contact with the truths of the universe. It is the book which engages the attention of scientists, but it is not restricted to them. All of us have some facility in reading this volume, or we wouldn't be alive. In this book of experience, we discover Theosophy in a new dress, and this dress is the garment we ourselves weave out of our own direct understanding.

THE ONENESS OF LIFE

One of the most important teachings of Theosophy, or the Ageless Wisdom, is the idea of the oneness of life. If we could fully understand this truth, we would have more peaceful and effective lives. It is the lack of appreciation for this principle that is responsible for much of the turmoil which besets individuals, groups, and nations. When man is able to recognize that all and everything are manifestations of one life or spirit, then there will be more tranquility throughout this world.

The concept of the oneness of life is not based on sentimentality or speculation but arises as an inescapable conclusion, both from the data of science and from the scriptures of the great religions. If we turn to science, we find that modern research into the nature of matter has demonstrated that the bewildering variety of forms which we see in the world around us are all manifestations of electromagnetic energy. This means that our bodies and the bodies of plants and animals are formed from the same source material. Energy itself is a name for something which is wholly mysterious and imperceptible, but which, when polarized in particular patterns, forms the chemical elements. These elements, in turn, are organized into the compounds which make up the bodies of living organisms.

What is the essential difference between, say, the body of a worm and the body of a man? These two forms arise from the same material. The differences in them are due to the way in which the material has been organized. The design of a human body is very different from and much more complex than the design of the body of a worm. In human affairs we observe this principle of organizing the same material into different designs. Bricks and other building materials are organized into houses of various designs; and certain basic materials are used to build an array of cars, trucks and vehicles of transportation. Likewise, in nature, the unthinkable complication of forms represents designs organized from a common source material.

What is this quality of organization which enables nature or ourselves to make such widely differing structures from the same source material? We know from our own experience that it requires mind or intelligence to build a house, a machine or any meaningful structure. We can assume that the tremend-

ously more complicated structures of nature, such as living bodies, also require intelligent supervision in their production and in their evolvment through ages of time. If we think about it we must realize that the total complication of man-built forms, which represent the material aspect of our civilization, is materialized thought. Every meaningful structure we put together is an embodied idea. Take away the thinking from human habitations and apparatus, and there would remain a pile of rubble. The same is true for the productions of nature. Remove the design from the body of a man, or any living organism, and we have left a pile of ashes. Remove the design from a chemical element and there would follow a tremendous explosion as that element was transformed back into wholly imperceptible electromagnetic energy. Back of all manifestation at whatever level it may be, chemical elements, bodies of living forms, or planets, or solar systems, the essential reality is the one life in its aspect of universal mind.

We can think of the one life as analogous to electricity. Electricity manifests different qualities in association with different types of apparatus. Under one set of circumstances, electricity will produce light, and in association with other apparatus there may be heat or power. Likewise, as we study the forms of nature, different qualities are associated with different types of organization. The one life manifests organization. The one life manifests certain capacities and characteristics in a dog, for example, and different qualities in a more highly developed being such as a man. Biologically, a man and a dog are quite similar, but there is a vast difference between them at the mental and emotional levels. A dog and a human being are manifestations of the same reality, but the expression of the one life is more limited as it works through the design of the lesser developed form.

Within humanity itself, we note marked differences between individuals in relation to temperament, intelligence and emotional qualities. This is necessarily so since each of us has evolved individually through ages of time and thus a certain uniqueness is stamped on each person. We all share this planet earth, and are sustained in body, mind and spirit from a common source; but each of us, within this framework of a common heritage and background of living, is individual and original, to a degree, in every aspect of our beings.

It is because of this uniqueness of the individual person

that The Theosophical Society stresses the necessity for each person to be free to proceed in his or her own way and pace in his approach to understanding. There is more than one way to the goal we seek. There are paths of spiritual development suited to the needs of different human types.

Many of us have a tendency to mistrust differences in race and religion, and the same is true to a lesser degree for certain individual differences. Society resents too much deviation from the prevailing patterns of belief and behavior. In many parts of the world, as we all know, there is much hate and turmoil generated by the belief that a particular race or religion is superior to others and should have special privileges. Since such assumptions are not based on reality, they lead to resentment and conflict.

In a deeper sense, the failure to recognize the One Life or Spirit as the underlying reality of all our fellow beings leads to unhappiness and frustration. Man is in truth a spiritual being. We may become confused about this, as so many do, and think of the body or the mind as our true selves; but beliefs do not change realities.

Since we are spiritual in our real nature, it is obvious that to the degree that we live in accordance with spiritual values, our lives will tend towards serenity and effectiveness; but as we turn away from the divinity within, there must inevitably be suffering and frustration. The reality in ourselves is the same as the reality in others. Another person may appear to us to be most disagreeable, but whatever qualities are responsible for this condition, they are not concerned with his real nature. He is first a spirit, just as we are; and this spirit is manifested through an evolving form which may be far from perfect. It is this inner spiritual nature which links us in brotherhood with each other and with all mankind.

As we fail to recognize the need for sympathy and friendliness towards all races, and their religions, we raise a barrier between our inner and outer selves. This does not mean that we should promote sentimental ties with every person that comes along. Our individual friendships and associations are not involved in this recognition of the tie of brotherhood. It is rather a matter of cultivating an attitude of goodwill and peace towards all mankind.

The ethics or the way of life set forth in religious teachings

is based on the idea of the oneness of life in the universe. This unity is not perceived in vestures or forms, but is of Spirit. If we are all as is stated in the Scriptures, children of God, then we are brothers indeed. The principle of brotherhood is emphasized in the teachings of Christ, Buddha, Krishna and other great religious leaders. In Christianity, there is much stress on brotherly love; and the followers of Buddha are taught to be compassionate towards all sentient beings.

The great religions stress adoration of the Spirit, or the Divinity, which pervades and sustains the universe. It is through this, we are told, that we are united with our fellow beings. In the Christian Scriptures, we read, "I am the vine and ye are the branches," meaning that as Christ represents the one life, so are we in him as the branches are part of the tree. In a Buddhist scripture it is stated, "... he who is seeking the way to the Brahma world (kingdom of heaven) lets his mind pervade all quarters of the world with thoughts of love...."

Whether we approach the problem of the origin of the universe through science, religion or our own intuition, we are forced to the conclusion that it is, in all its forms and aspects, a manifestation of One Life or Spirit. There are stages in evolutionary development when it is impossible for man to appreciate this principle, but today the survival of human civilization depends on its recognition. Science in its onward march has made available to man powers which will lead to devastation of human affairs unless there is a growing acceptance of the oneness of life. But the kind of brotherhood which will insure man against the chaos of modern war must be universal in scope. It must especially transcend differences in race and religion. Tolerance, sympathy, friendliness for all will lead us into more radiant living.

MANKIND

Concern with one's personal affairs is a natural inclination. The problem of living harmoniously in body and mind occupies most of our attention. There is the search for happiness, for accomplishment, both for ourselves and for those near to us. Many feel that if, as they say, they tend to their own business, living worthwhile lives, they have done their duty to themselves and to their fellowmen.

No doubt such people are to be commended, and the world would be a much happier place if everyone attained to such standards of conduct. But for those who have looked a little deeper into the realities of man and nature, something more becomes necessary. According to the Ageless Wisdom, or Theosophy, our well-being is intimately associated with the well-being of humanity as a whole. Human beings are so closely related to each other that no person, group or nation can be isolated from the rest of mankind without suffering grave consequences.

In the three main objectives of The Theosophical Society, the first and most important is stated as follows: "To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color." Why so much stress on the relation which each of us bears to our fellow human beings? The answer is that the concept of brotherhood involves a basic truth, the recognition of which is essential not only to man's spiritual evolvement, but to the ordinary affairs of day-to-day living. Until we are able to appreciate this principle, spiritual progress is delayed.

The world seems to be made up of diverse elements that have no special connection with each other. We observe on all sides plants, animals, and human beings. Each individual living organism appears to be a separate, disconnected unit. Yet scientific discoveries have demonstrated that all this universe, at the physical level, is a manifestation of electromagnetic energy. Our bodies and the bodies of other people have developed from the same source. Thus, we can appreciate that we are all united in the sense that physically we are fabricated from the same material. Also, our physical well-being is both supported and menaced by conditions which affect others in a similar manner. We know, for example, that vast numbers of people in this world do not have adequate food supplies. This being so, it follows that hoarded or wasted food by the people of one country may contribute to

disease and death among the human beings of other areas. In this one instance is certainly exemplified an important kind of human interrelationship.

The rare individuals who have developed capacities which enable them to investigate realms of matter not perceptible to our ordinary senses have reported that, just as there is physical matter, there are also finer types of matter which make up the mental and emotional planes of nature. Just as our physical bodies are made up of material from the physical world, so we have also emotional and mental bodies interpenetrating the physical and compounded from the emotional and mental planes of matter. And just as we share with our fellow beings the resources and conditions of the physical world, we also share the planes of mind and emotion.

We know the tremendous effect of the written and spoken word, and we have a responsibility in this respect to our fellow human beings. But as we learn from theosophical teachings, there is a still graver responsibility attached to our unexpressed thoughts and emotions. What we think and feel are not the private affairs we have considered them to be. We are constantly affected by the thoughts and emotions of others, and we influence our fellow human beings in the same way. For example, through race and religious prejudice and intolerance we may think and feel in a way that injures people with whom we have had no physical contact; and since the law of cause and effect, or karmic law, is automatic in its adjustments there is inevitably suffering for us in return.

Yes, we are united with our fellow human beings at the physical, emotional and mental levels, and beyond that we are united through the radiance of spirit which is man's true Self. In the New Testament, St. Paul stresses that the Christ symbolizes Life. In Colossians 3:4, he says, "Christ...is our life," and again, in Colossians 3:11, "Christ is all, and in all." The same thought is expressed in John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit for without me ye can do nothing." These thoughts from the Bible are in accord with the growing sense of oneness of the world which is emerging through science and which is in accord with our own intuition. Such truths put the concept of brotherhood in a new light. We begin to appreciate that we can no more turn our backs on mankind than we can isolate ourselves from such items as air, food, sunlight, which tie us to the earth and

the solar system.

There is another facet to this concept of brotherhood which is rarely considered: we owe the universe a tremendous debt. No special revelation or teachings are necessary to make us realize this fact. In our long evolution from the mineral through plant and animal to human beings, everything has been provided without compensation from us. We do note the same sort of provision in a human family. The parents enfold the child in their protecting care until it has developed sufficiently to look after itself. In return each generation satisfies this particular debt by doing the same for its children, or for others. But what about the incalculable obligation we have incurred in the course of our evolvement to the human stage? To suppose that the long sequence of events occurring through millions of years could have just happened by chance is to depart from all human experience. We know that when things are left to themselves, they lapse into disorder, so it is obvious that human evolution could have proceeded only on the basis of intelligent supervision. The fact is that the forces of nature have been guided, within the law, on our behalf. Now mankind is arriving at the stage of development where they can begin to pay their own way in the universe and can begin to discharge the debt carried over from past ages. This can be done as we recognize our special kinship with all human beings and the responsibility we have to lend a hand to the forces which are working to bring to humanity greater harmony and well-being. As we awaken to this work we place ourselves in accord with the law of the universe.

The Ageless Wisdom teaches us that there are those who watch over all humanity, and without them there would be no escape from the turmoil and suffering which so afflict mankind. But the actual work must be done through human agents, through enlightened members of humanity itself.

Mankind is made up, as we all know, of many races and religions. There are people of differing stages of capacity and behavior. According to theosophical teachings, man attains a stage where he works out his own destiny, and so becomes an independent, conscious being. He acquires wisdom and knowledge through experience gained in many lives. Gradually he takes his place in the work of the universe. Each individual is, to a degree, different from all others. He has aptitudes for particular tasks which he can do with special effective-

ness. There is work waiting for each of us which will be uniquely ours. At the same time, with increase in understanding, we must learn to appreciate that in spite of the differences which characterize each of us, we are all manifestations of the One Spirit or Life.

The concept of brotherhood is grounded in truth. We can ignore it only at the cost of suffering and frustration in our own lives and in the lives of others. Reason and intuition bear witness to the principle that humanity has evolved from the One Spirit which is the reality in all this Cosmos. Each of us is individual, but we have all evolved from the same materials and are all illuminated by the One Radiance. Part of the heritage of man is the capacity for growth in freedom through knowledge and wisdom. But in order to grow he must proceed through the experiences of pleasure and pain, guided by the law of karma. And not the least of the lessons to be learned is understanding the principle of brotherhood. Until we can appreciate our true relationship and obligation to our fellow human beings, the world will continue in states of great turmoil and hardships.

It is because of the almost universal idea that each of us is separate, without any but sentimental ties with others, that wars and strife occupy so much of man's resources and attention. We have become so concentrated on superficial appearances that we have lost touch with the deeper significance of human relationships.

As more and more people awaken to the realization that there is only One Life or Spirit in the universe, and that it manifests through myriads of human and other forms, an era will dawn on mankind that is full of happiness and brilliant with accomplishments. The time must come when all human beings will be united into one big family. The alleviation of pain and distress will then be common responsibility, and all mankind will be working together for the good of the whole.

THE NATURE OF MAN

In Hebrews 2:6-7, we read, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?Thou madest him a little lower than the angels:.....and didst set him over the works of thy hands." This question has been before us down through the ages. The philosopher, the scientist, the religious teacher have given various answers. From our own experience as human beings, we should know something about man. But our knowledge is so individualistic, so colored by personal experience and background of race, family and religion that there is little agreement on this important question.

There are, of course, a few things we all take for granted. We all know that a man has a physical body and that there are such conditions as emotions, thoughts and intuitions. But we instinctively think of the physical body as the reality of a person. We look at John Smith. He has a certain stature, a particular appearance due to such characteristics as the shape of his nose and mouth. We think of him as we see him. His words, his emotions are all related to his physical form. As the years leave their mark on his appearance, we say he is getting older. When there is something wrong with his body, we say he is sick. In other words, our attitude implies that he is the body. The relating of people to their physical appearance is an attitude which is just as common among religious as nonreligious people. We hear much discussion about spiritual values, but in actual practice the individual is reduced to that which we can perceive through our sense organs.

We live in a very materialistic age. Most people crave material possessions. A man's standing in a community is assessed in terms of such things as earnings, goods, houses and cars. Our bodies are taken for granted as long as we have health, but when sickness or accidents arise we become greatly concerned. This is the result of our materialistic viewpoint. We consciously or unconsciously associate ourselves with the physical body, and so when it is endangered we feel that our very existence is at stake. If we become hopelessly ill, we depend on the doctor to utilize every available means, including surgical operations, to extend the duration of our life, even if only for a few months.

We spend a lot of time and effort prying into the secrets of the universe. It is important for us to have as much knowledge as possible of the facts and laws of nature. Our sur-

vival and well-being necessitate that we know all we can about the beings and things of the world around us. But what we really need to know is more about ourselves. We need knowledge which extends beyond the cells, tissues and organs of our physical body. If we are to understand human beings we must know especially about states and conditions which cannot be perceived through our sense organs.

We have an example of the delusion which comes from judging things on the basis of appearance when we consider human productions. Suppose we would try to understand an automobile on the basis of its color, the sounds it emits, or the feel of its surface. By such an approach we would miss the reality of the machine. In order to understand an automobile, or anything else made by man, we must go behind our sense perceptions. An automobile is essentially a design which has been thought out by engineers. And this design has been embodied in suitable materials to produce the car before us. If the design of the car is removed, there remains a meaningless pile of materials. The essential reality then, in human construction, is that which cannot be perceived through the sense organs. The same principle applies to the infinitely more complicated human being.

A clear and forthright account of man's nature is given in theosophical teachings. Through Theosophy we contact a consistent and logical explanation of this important subject. Further these teachings help us to appreciate material from other sources concerned with man. The meaning of the scriptures becomes clearer, and the facts and principles of science gain new significance in the light of theosophical knowledge.

Theosophy, or the Ageless Wisdom, has emerged from careful investigation by individuals trained in both physical and superphysical research. This wisdom is not the result of some person's inspiration or imagination. It is based solidly on research which has been carried on through the ages of human history. Further, the truths of the basic principles of Theosophy are in accord with our experience and with the discoveries of science.

According to these teachings, man is a combination of a personality and a Spiritual Self. The personality is what we know in ourselves and in others. It consists of mind, emotions and physical body. We are all familiar with these aspects of human nature. Our minds are concerned with think-

ing, reasoning, understanding. Love, hate, anger, joy are of the emotions. The physical body perceives and experiences through activity and through its biological needs and desires. These three aspects of our nature should not be confused with each other. A person may associate himself with the mind, but still believe the mind to be a product of the nervous system. In that case, the individual considers the physical body as the reality in man. However, we know from experience, that thinking and feeling are more immediate and direct realities than the physical body.

Everything we know or experience is in consciousness. The body and the world we live in come to our consciousness or sense of awareness through sensation. Our awareness or consciousness dwells in the mind and in the emotions. And yet the basic reality of our beings is not in the personality. We cannot say, "I am the mind," or, "I am the physical body." Back of these states there is always the I-consciousness which is of the Spiritual Self.

The Spiritual Self is our real Self. Man is a soul and has a body, mind and emotions. The personality is the instrument through which the Spiritual Self works and plays, and so gains the experience that leads to wisdom and understanding. It is the Spiritual Self that survives the death of the body. It is the Spiritual Self which, after a period of rest in the heaven world, comes back to earth and begins a new life.

We have this tangible physical body, and interpenetrating it are the emotional and mental bodies. Of still finer material is the soul which contains the Spiritual Self. Consciousness is of the Spirit, and it is consciousness which unites the Spiritual Self with the mind, emotions and body of the personality. The Spiritual Self is the source of our appreciation of beauty, harmony and truth. The mind, when deprived of the wisdom of the inner spirit, becomes irrational or insane. Sympathy, love, friendliness are spiritual qualities. As we read in James 3:17, "...the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle..... full of mercy and good fruits...."

The personality has its life span and then disintegrates, beginning first with the physical body, followed by the emotional and mental bodies. The reality within us is the Spirit which is immortal. All this world of beings and things which so absorbs our attention is a fleeting, transitory phenomenon.

That is the reason that if we attempt to base our lives on worldly things, we inevitably come into great suffering. Time sweeps the material values away, and so the materialist eventually loses all his possessions.

On the other hand, spiritual values are not affected by time or circumstances. We begin to appreciate them as we grow in understanding and become more aware of their beauty. Those who anchor themselves to the things of the spirit pass peacefully and happily through the happenings of a lifetime. They are not deceived by appearances. They realize that when we attribute stability and permanence to material objects, we are deluding ourselves. The world of time and space is as transitory as the cloud forms that drift across the sky. The old gives way to the new. New forms are constantly arising and just as constantly passing out of existence.

It is of the utmost importance for us to know the basic facts about man's nature, since such knowledge enables us to live more serene and effective lives. We must learn to know, both consciously and unconsciously, that we are not the physical body, whether in health, sickness or death. We must learn to stand aside from our thoughts and emotions so that we are gradually able to control them.

Man is compounded of the divine and the material. As it is stated in I Corinthians 3:16, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." The temple is the mind, emotions and physical body. The God-nature is the Divine Self which slowly awakens through ages of experience gained in numerous lives.

In almost every field of knowledge, the basic principles are simple and easily understood. It is the application of the principles that lead us into a mass of facts and details. We can read ponderous volumes devoted to human anatomy, physiology, psychology and still miss the reality in human nature. As said before, man is essentially a spiritual being. When we take the divinity out of man, all we have left is a meaningless shell. But when we turn to the Spirit in ourselves and in others, we discover the key to the understanding of the nature of man.

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OJAI, CALIFORNIA